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M/V LeConte Runs Aground at Cozian Reef, All Passengers Safe

Flooding stopped, Coast Guard and NOAA Responds

(Juneau)—An incident has occurred involving the Alaska Marine Highway Motor Vessel *LeConte*. The ferry ran hard aground on Cozian Reef in Peril Straits at approximately 9:55 a.m. The *LeConte* was enroute from Angoon to Sitka. Two forward spaces on the port side flooded and the ship is reported to be listing at 10 degrees.

All 86 passengers were safely deployed to life rafts and are accounted for without injuries. Coast Guard Cutter Liberty and Maple are underway to assist the distressed ship and a helicopter from Coast Guard Air Station Sitka is at the scene. NOAA's ship, *John Cobb*, has picked up most of the passengers. Those remaining were picked up by a Good Samaritan ship. Passengers are being transported to Sitka. Two boats from Allen Marine are scheduled to arrive at Cozian Reef at 12:30 to assist the damaged vessel. All 24 crew members are still aboard.

The port side solid waste hold and bow thruster flooded. There is no spillage to report. Currently, water levels in the ship are decreasing due to the outgoing tide. Divers and a salvage team are responding to patch the hull and help guide the ship off the reef when the tide comes up at 13:45 hours this afternoon.

The *LeConte* was built in 1974 and is capable of carrying 250 passengers. The vessel is 235' in length and can accommodate up to 34 vehicles. There has not yet been a report regarding the condition of the vehicles aboard the *LeConte*.

The emergency response public relations coordinator is Nona Wilson. All questions and requests for information should be addressed to her at this number: (907) 465-3904.

More information to follow.

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